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Methods of Analysis of Local Tourist Systems

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Abstract

The phenomenon of tourism, due to the variables involved and their instability, is a highly complex and dynamic sector. Faced with an increasingly competitive market, characterized by political, economic and social megatrends which affect local performance, the role of the setting becomes significant. In fact, territorial properties, through tangible and intangible elements, can trigger the development process or, conversely, affect the evolution when the local context does not allow for growth conditions and management of competition.

The variety of configurations, structures and phenomena within the territory make it a highly structured knowledge process, with the enhancing and upgrading of the local characteristics.

However, one of the main problems is that legislation does not clarify the operational aspect of a definite boundary between Local Touristic System within the territorial context, deferring the need to identify approaches to the districts themselves. The choice of variables to investigate and the systemic reading that they should be given, determine the responsibility of creating a functional knowledge framework to the adoption of decision trajectories in line with territorial inclinations.

The proposal that has inspired and supported the research presented in this paper can also be included within this context, with scientific applications and knowledge requirements needed by policy makers engaged in the drawing up and implementation of local development policies.

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Keywords: tourism, local systems, methodology of analysis, districts.

Introduction

The phenomenon of tourism, due to the variables involved and their instability, is a highly complex and dynamic sector. Faced with an increasingly competitive market, characterized by political, economic and social megatrends which affect local performance, the role of the setting becomes significant. In fact, territorial properties, through tangible and intangible elements, can trigger the development process or, conversely, affect the evolution when the local context does not allow for growth conditions and management of competition.

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The proposal that has inspired and supported the research presented in this paper can also be included within this context, with scientific applications and knowledge requirements needed by policy makers engaged in the drawing up and implementation of local development policies.

1. District logic applied to tourism

The perspective adopted originates from the need to build or strengthen integrated tourism as well as the accommodating capacity of the places, on the basis of district logic, in a phase of enlarged competition between the complex offer systems. The aim is to verify or improve, even in the tourism sector, the logic of competition/cooperation based on the integration of people and resources. As with other manufacturing areas, rural areas need to show the ability to meet consumer needs upon which the revitalization of the competitiveness of a territorial system can be based.

Even the tourist districts can be used as models of specialised production supported by redevelopment projects as well as an overall development of the area.

Appreciated in scientific circles for some time, the concept of SLOT (Dematteis, Government, 2005) is intended as all those new forms of territorial aggregation with the potential to increase the tourist structures, attractions, facilities and services located within a specific territory, on the basis of consultation between private and public actors. SLOT produces a detailed and integrated offer, creating a system of specific and definitive tourist structures that enhances both the local resources and culture (Dallari, 2007).

However, the search for a district, in empirical terms, introduces a number of operational difficulties.

The first difficulty lies in the definition of a homogeneous territory, with distinctive skills and resources. The identification of geographical boundaries is also relevant with respect to the validation of the system by local stakeholders, institutions, as well as the public and private sectors, who, in turn, should all recognize that they are part of the system and confirm their membership to a relational system housed within the defined territory in order for development to be more effective.

The second problem relates to the analysis of the “state of the art”, or in other words, the initial territorial structures, around which the integrated local offer is organized, which involves defining the elements of the district to be investigated.

For the industrial district, the essential characteristics can be found in a set of tangible and intangible factors, summarized as: the population of territorially localized businesses, specialized production, in other words, the presence of a specialized sector that characterizes local development; the separation of the production process, with the presence of many companies, each specializing in a specific stage of the production chain.

Specialization then assumes the characteristics of flexibility, determined by:

- ability of the businesses, small and medium-sized, to adapt quickly and efficiently to exogenous changes;
- presence of a European market, characterized by the “paradoxical” presence of elements that can be traced to competition (the market) and the custom of mutual cooperation (EU);
- subsidiary nature between businesses;
- presence of a Marshallian context that promotes the exchange of information, and thus transactional fluidity;
- support from the institutions, in other words, the support and promotion by local and private authorities.

The description of the characteristics of the territory are obtained through several different factors, which are not only productive, but are also social, demographic and institutional.

For example, demographic dynamics can have a significant effect on how much technology and investment propensity can influence the offer, as well as generation change and the definition of the degree of persistence of tourism within certain contexts. The institutional factors refer not only to the role of institutions responsible for the development in conveying the growth of individual businesses, but also intensify the inclination to consume the institutional offer by policies for local development, controlling the dynamics within different territorial contexts. The variable related to consumer policy is an innovative methodology, which assumes, to be tested empirically, that a territorial district type system has two conditions: high consumption dynamics

and therefore a strong tendency to exploit the opportunities offered by national, regional and European regulations and in line with consumer policy, i.e. a strong inclination to consumption policies in the areas of specialization.

Relational goods concerning the area of socialization also have a strong impact on economic development processes. In particular, individual virtues determine the drive towards efficiency and can be represented by the supplying of computer equipment by the contractor, the attendance of professional training courses, the use of credit as well as all the activities undertaken as a result of independent decisions that increase the "quality" of its business. The social virtues highlight the entrepreneur's ability to adhere to social and local networks, such as cooperatives and associations, collective activity of production enhancement (De Rosa Turri, 2004).

The intangible resources which are strategically advanced and influential on the formation of critical resources for local development, are not always reproducible. These may trigger development mechanisms, but, through processes of obsolescence, also regressive localism phenomena.

Therefore, the course is not always virtuous, but can be vicious, with negative effects resulting from the existence of territorial proximity. Geographical proximity defines the territorial space within which social relations between firms and local actors can develop. Whereas, organizational proximity is a much wider concept, valid within local systems, which focuses on logic similarity and belonging. Geographical proximity is therefore necessary but not sufficient to trigger virtuous development mechanisms. It is simply a basis for promoting social interaction, which can lead to organizational proximity processes (Bellet Colletis, Leng, 1993).

Moreover, there is no doubt that if these mechanisms are working properly, they can determine, as a consequence, the emergence of more specific resources in the form of local institutions that carry out local development. This is closely connected to the fact that proximity, in its virtuous meaning, also implies a significant reduction in transaction costs. The transmission of information seems fluid, the exchanges between local actors are defined by automatic mechanisms, repetitive and often informal that, perpetuated over time, take the form of routines and agreements. Strictly formalized negotiating gives way to informal and therefore cheaper contractual solutions, a *handshake*. Therefore, when faced with the complexity of transactions, the choice of contractual solutions is not obvious and the hierarchical solution is not an obligatory course (Williamson, 2000).

This highlights how the measuring of topical local development phenomena require complex methodologies, which cannot always be easily defined.

In fact, the empirical analysis carried out so far, generally follow parallel paths and hardly ever converge. On the one hand, there are empirical studies with a strong statistical descriptive connotation, that aggregate groups of territories linked by similar characteristics, whose significance remains bound to the availability of variables from official statistics. While on the other, there is the use of preconceived zoning, but for other sectors, such as local work systems

that meet the requirements of a consistent and unassailable zoning (officially shared), to be transferred to local touristic realities, creating a sense of dissatisfaction with the lack of information on the intangible variables (Romano, 1999). Finally, the exclusive use of field investigation demotes local analysis to an exclusive territorial context, without the possibility to create a generalized analytical model.

2. The proposed methodology

The proposed methodology provides different conceptual stages, which correspond to the steps of the survey:

- identification and measurement of a district, tangible and intangible factors;
- the location of a town in relation to a tourist life cycle;
- definition of policy demand expressed by the different areas.

The first phase should provide a satisfactory level of investigation, aimed at a reading, as clear and efficient as possible, of the identity card of a tourist system.

The proposed methodology includes the development of a detailed mapping and *analysis of the territory*, identifying itineraries aimed at setting up territorial excellences (environmental, historical and cultural) that characterize the landscape of the territory being studied. In addition, the production factors (productive specialization and corporate structure) are also closely analyzed, relating to the presence of relational goods as well as data on the inclination to consume sectorial economic policies and the activation of other tools for local development. The field analysis is aimed, firstly, at confirming the information obtained from the statistical investigation. Secondly, it is aimed at acquiring information on the level of transaction costs, the flow of information as well as other elements of its (neo)institutional economy.

The need to obtain an objective schematization and characterization for each local reference system includes the use a specific set of indicators, with each one answering to a well-defined need; *specialized production, the strength of the manufacturing base, relational goods structure, population dynamics, consumption policies, policy tools*.

The analysis of *specialized production, by location coefficients*, qualifies the local system in a sectorial sense, highlighting the divisions in the area. The *strength of the manufacturing base, analysed through* the structure indices, measures the types of offer prevailing in the local system of reference.

The degree of territorial specialization is individualized using the coefficient of location expressed by the following formula:

$$Q_{ps} = \frac{X_{ps} / X_p}{X_s / X_{..}}$$

where

p = local system, s = compartment, X.s = the total firms in the compartment s, X = the total firms regional.

The consistency of relational goods, shows the efficiency of the employers as well as the ability of the business to relate to the context in which it operates or join associations and benefit from activities without management techniques. The consistence of good report them, list in individual and social virtue, is analyzed through a procedure similar to the precedents, using a synthetic indicator of endowment, inferred by the average of the indicators singly calculated for every variable in the following way:

$$Q_{ps} = \frac{X_{ps} / X_p}{X.s / X..}$$

where

X represents, of time in time, the followings aspects:

- Social virtue (1. exploitation and marketing of the products, 2. associative organisms, 3. technical support, 4. managerial assistance, 5. liabilities)
- Individual virtue (1. computer equipments 2. professional formation 3. rate of schooling 4. resorted to the credit).

Social virtues define the ability of the enterprises to report him with the context in which they operates; these are essentially translated in the ability to stick to associative organisms and to profit of activity of technical absence, managerial, etc...

The individual virtues make reference instead to the so-called push to the efficiency of the touristic entrepreneur, to its personal motivation, and they are concretized in the frequency of courses of professional formation, in the endowment of computer equipments and, in general, in the achieved cultural level. The choice of these indicators is also finalized to the utility of the statistical datum, from the moment that the underlined variables are recoverable from the general census of the industry and services.

Population dynamics of the territorial system are also an innovative indicator and are particularly effective in shaping future social scenarios, in particular related to the reproductive ability of the local system as well as the effectiveness of the policies of generation change.

The use of the indicator of *consumption of economic policy* is new to empirical applications on local systems and starts from the consideration that, given a certain territorial specialization, it must, coherently, correspond to a "symmetrical" consumption policy, focusing on areas of specialization in tourism, which characterizes the territorial system.

The use of the indicator of consumption of the economic politics for the touristic areas constitutes a novelty in the applications on the local touristic systems and part from the consideration that, gives a certain territorial specialization, to it

has to correspond, coherently, a consumption of the politics "symmetrical", or proper based on the sectors of specialization, that characterize the territorial system. Insofar, the unity of analysis is not only the territory, but also the politics for that territory; this has induced to appraise the consumption of economic politics for the turistic sector, founding him/it upon two requisite:

" the coherence or the symmetry with the productive specialization, in the hypothesis that the consumption of politics is directed really toward that compartments to greater territorial specialization;

"the degree of territorial sensibility to the consumption of politics, middly enacted by the greater presence of enterprises market-oriented, particularly of professional firms, that in our opinion, they hold a greater degree of attention toward the offer of economic politics for the touristic sector.

The index of consumption of the politics, synthesized in the underlying formula:

$$SS = \frac{Smisn,a / Stot,a}{Stot,misn / Stot}$$

where:

S = specialization of the expense

Smis n, to = spends measure n in the Territorial System

S tot, mis n = spends total measure in the Economic European Programs and Founds

S tot, to = spends total in the Territorial System

S tot = spends total regional through out the Economic European Programs and Founds

Relatively to the tools of policy, also the adhesion to integrated projects, financed by the Region and finalized both to the exploitation of the touristic sector that to the realization of models of integrated rural development. The activation of these tools underlines an ability of the territory of to identify himself in a determined territorial program. In substance, it is as if the territory recognized him in one determined offer of politics and that the choice of a determined tool allows the actors of the territory to build the famous paper of identity of the territory (that is of him same). to plot her some territory they extend so to recompose him the one with the other, the one with the aid of the other.

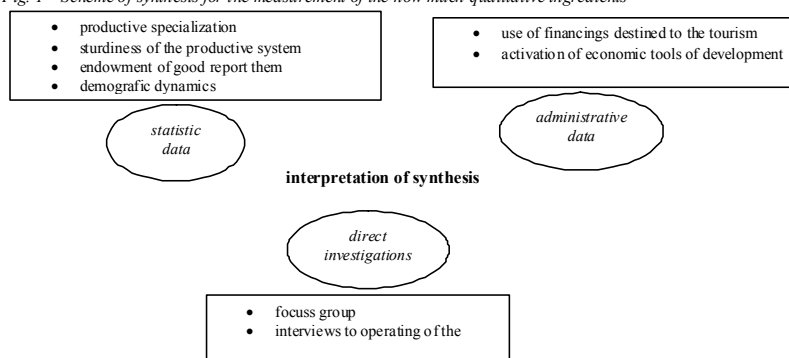
Moreover, it is evaluated with respect to *policy tools*, including the adhesion to integrated projects and aimed at the exploitation of supply chains to obtain integrated development models. The activation of these instruments highlight an ability of the territory to represent itself and identify itself within a specific territorial project.

The analysis (fig.1) should be supplemented by a qualitative research aimed at investigating the intangible and relational elements, implicit in the minds of the actors within the territory. This phase, which allows the quality of social capital present in different territorial systems to be studied in greater detail, is obtained by organizing focus groups of key players of the territory and interviews with local actors.

Particularly, the analyzed variable are indicated in the atmosphere of collaboration, the technological innovation, the technical support, the support of the public Institutions, the resorted to the credit and the presence of associations.

For all of the analysis different sources of information are been individualized.

Fig. 1 – Scheme of synthesis for the measurement of the how much-qualitative ingredients



The second phase involves the collocation of a village in relation to a *tourist life cycle*.

In this phase, the integration of information and representation in a cognitive framework of synthesis takes place. The need to obtain a classification that includes the differences between different territorial systems assumes the distinction between territories that either have or do not have a systemic characterization. The regional context may have areas with either little or low levels of tourist development, as well as areas with significant specializations with strong interpersonal skills.

The different configurations are classified according to a definition of ideal types of local tourist systems, representing transitional situations, likely to change (progress or regression) compared to their position in the “life-cycle”.

In addition to extreme solutions, characterized, respectively, by the absence of all the district factors (non-touristic area) or a full Marshallian structure (district), it is possible to predict an intermediate situation, representing the tourist industry, featuring gradual district factors. In relation to a hypothetical tourist life cycle, the following development models can be defined: weak area, specialized tourist area, tourist system, proto-tourist district, tourist district.

The area of specialization is a territory suited to tourism, in which the presence of resources is accompanied by good tourist facilities. Empirical evidence is therefore subject to the presence of high levels of specialization, single or multi-sectorial. The manufacturing base must also be strong, with the presence of professional companies, as summarized by an index of professionalism. However, the model, does assume systemic characteristics, as it has the factors of a relational nature as well as those of a Marshallian context. In particular, the level of transaction costs is particularly high due to the improper

flow of information, making it very costly to access the relative market. Negotiating is strictly formalized and subject to high costs of contract *enforcement*, with a substantial deficiency in the range of relational goods. Consumption policies must meet the requirements of consistency, being directed to the same sectors of specialization.

Subject to production and structural variables as well as consumption policies, unlike the previous model, the local tourist system highlights an ability to “set up a system” and therefore a range of positive, not excessive, relational assets. Even the demographic variables improve, with an index of aging less than one. The space of relations is characterized by a certain formality in the contractual relations that does not necessarily imply a lack of trust, but simply indicates a need for “certainty” in the exchanges.

The proto-district represents the district *under construction*, with embryonic factors due to a Marshallian context. In empirical terms, the specialization indicators are added to the relational indicators and demographic changes, relatively positive with a low rate of aging. Therefore, a relatively informal negotiating dimension is required, based on the custom of mutual cooperation, although not perfectly realized. At this stage, institutional support to the development of supply chains is particularly significant. Finally, consumption policies must be consistent with the specialization indices and thus be particularly high in sectors where the territory is suited. The dynamism in accepting the offer of the policies is highlighted in the supply chains, as well as in sectorial interventions.

The tourist district should have all the quantitative factors, with variables which can be traced back to intangible factors, typical of the district, such as specialized production and the activation of interventions aimed at the exploitation of specialist sectors. The nature of the district must be confirmed by the presence of a climate of trust that translates into the free circulation of information, informal negotiating, characterized by high frequency and mutual cooperation, as well as the low *ex ante* and *ex post* transaction costs.

The territories may therefore present a more or less complete range of qualitative and quantitative factors, with an organizational district type configuration being attributed. However, it may also present less substantial tangible and intangible elements, assuming an intermediate form of organization.

The varied definitions of local-tourist situations on a regional scale introduce the third phase of the methodology, focusing on defining the *request for policies*, expressed by different ideal types, useful to “accompany” the systems towards organizational forms that are similar to a district one.

Starting from the complexity that characterizes most of the territory, it is possible to identify the key issues relating to the different stages of the development of the life cycle. Critical elements such as *human capital*, *the productive context*, *relational capital* and *local development policies* are all key factors that can be traced back to the organizational effectiveness and competitive capacity of different local systems. These elements contribute to

explaining, in part, the greater consistency and quality of the relational goods and, therefore, the improved organizational capacity of the relative territory, that determine the classification for more advanced systems. In better organized territorial systems (those with a systemic inclination, in particular proto-district and district), *human capital* registers positive signs of openness to external interactions, sensitivity to innovations as well as professional retraining and dynamism in access to policies. However, this contrasts with a larger territorial reality, relating to areas of specialization, where human capital shows more or less widespread but rather significant structural weaknesses. Ageing, low education levels, poor inclination to external opening (the company and the local context) as well as organizational and technological innovations of the entrepreneurial class of systems are known applicants falling in the first stage of the "life cycle". Everything that is outside the company (market, politics, etc.) appears to be marginal in the hierarchy of business interests, but are filtered from the outside world to which traditional intermediate figures are delegated some of the more important functions of modern management: the marketing function and the strategic choices. The scenario above, in some cases, is worsened by the inability to produce tourism and exploit local resources, or to make a system of the existing ones. The weakness of the competitive ability could represent a major limiting factor for the development of regional economies.

Another important issue concerns the consistency and quality of *relational capital*. In a time of increasing openness of markets, it is worth highlighting the importance for individual companies as a local system, the relational networks (through which to exchange information, mutual cooperation, services), in building its competitive advantage. The general shortage of social capital can be explained by the widespread culture of individualism and distrust (quality of human capital) which still appears to be the very element found in several local systems.

This interpretation leads to an important role in building relational capital and new development policies being attributed. This development is focused on the exploitation of local resources, integrated planning as well as a primary, responsible and participative role of the local public and private actors. The ways in which the local actors could express their participation and their leadership in building the original trajectory of development has been identified through "consultation".

The new local development tools propose mechanisms that aim at balancing the needs of competitive development of the individual sectors, based on an efficiency-minded logic, with those aimed at creating the conditions to support a balanced and harmonious social and economic development of specific territories, characterized by objective conditions of disadvantage. One of the most relevant models of local development concerns the decentralization of decision-making responsibilities, in which the devolution of the powers of *policy*, through a closer understanding of local situations, is designed to enable the development of synergies between the programming tools.

The success of this approach is not automatic, especially when taking into account several consultation experiences, which as a relational capital building tool, has become an opportunity for negotiating between parties, each of which has put micro-territorial and/or sector interests on the table. This has led to integrated projects being created as a mere sum of individual actions unrelated to each other, often overlapping and conflicting between the different programming tools applied in a given area (Marotta, 2005).

The applicative worth of the knowledge tool lies in the possibility to provide strategic guidance relating to opportunities aimed at strengthening the competitiveness of mature areas or the progressive growth of contexts with potential untapped tourism. Ultimately, the classification of local systems within the overall models (life cycle) is configured as an understanding and interpretation analysis tool. The model produced can support both local actors, who can undertake, with greater awareness, the developmental trajectories that are in line with the characteristics of the territorial system of reference, for the regional policy makers, in reference to the definition of districts, as well as more importantly, a focused definition of supply policies and functional tools to the specific needs of the different areas.

3. Possible application to the regional context

The analysis to be conducted on a municipal scale for the entire region is aimed at:

- 1) identifying significant tourist areas on the basis of a defined set of indicators;
- 2) obtaining a clusterisation of the organizational-territorial models of tourist resorts on the levels of specialization and complexity of tourism and economic system on the basis of the characteristics of the demand.

For the analysis of *specialized production*, structural indicators relating to the distribution of hotels by category and number of beds, holiday farms, restaurants, employment in the hospitality and catering sector, distribution of local tourist boards and travel agencies are considered. The indicators used are: arrival and departure of tourists, holiday sites, number of beds in the tourist structure, tourist pressure index, number of people employed in tourism, hotel composition index, density of territorial tourist structures index. Starting from the analysis of the context as well as the historical, cultural and archaeological monuments, not only should the archaeological evidence found along the route be reported, but so should the historical, cultural and environmental monuments, in the perspective of the system. Culturally significant itineraries and relevant tourist attractions should be identified, aimed at upgrading the resources of the area. For the centres studied, it is important to obtain datasheets divided into several fields. The first relating to the historical-geographical context of the centres. The second aimed at illustrating the various archaeological sites. The third relating to the artistic-historical

monuments. The research must be accompanied by photographs in order to present the centres included in the itinerary.

The analysis of the strength of the manufacturing base includes developing an index of economic specialization of monuments and services “characteristic” of tourism, the accessibility and product complexity/diversification index. It also includes a study on variables such as holiday homes, degree of internationalization, seasonality of tourists, average cost of a room in different hotel categories, average expenditure per capita subtracted from average cost per category, use of tourist structures, organized tourism vs. DIY tourism.

For the analysis of the population dynamics, the issues relating to population distribution and structure by age, education levels, occupational structure, housing situation, with reference to the age of homes and empty houses are analyzed in detail.

For the analysis of relational goods, specific fields were defined and designed to analyze the social virtues (enhancement and marketing of the offer, associations, technical and managerial assistance) and individual virtues (equipment, training, education, debt).

Consumption policies, designed to measure the consistency with specialized production and the degree of sensitivity to local political consumption is calculated as the index of specialization for each item of expenditure to the regional total.

The analysis of policy tools, obtained through data provided by regional offices, verifies the adhesions to integrated projects and socio-economic development, aimed at enhancing the sector funded by the Region. The activation of these tools has highlighted the ability of the territory to represent and identify itself within a specific territorial project.

The information collected is then organised, through a geographic information system, and used for the drawing up of maps as well as the editing, analysing and querying of the data. The information collected is used for the preparation of thematic maps, accompanied by iconographic and photographic images to provide cognitive frameworks of both regional tourism system as a whole, as well as the macro areas selected for investigation. It is expected that the model, built using innovative IT methodologies, can contribute to the promotion of less popular historical, cultural, environmental and archaeological areas by enriching the tourist offer as well as facilitate the exchange of know-how, promoting actions of territorial cooperation.

4. Conclusions

The primary aim of the research is mainly methodological, developing an analysis capable of “reading and interpreting” the organizational complexity of tourist systems as well as reconstructing the identity card of the territories, based on environmental, structural, manufacturing, institutional and relational factors.

In fact, the local systems can have many different characteristics, resulting from different geographical, morphological, topographical, human and socio-economic conditions, but also by the consistency, of the quality of the density of certain variables in one location (relational goods, efficacy of the policy tools).

The range of policies must be able to meet the specific needs of each local system, with reference to the type of development path taken and the evolutionary profile (specialization, system, proto-district, district), highlighting a need for interventions in line with the specificities and structures of the territory. The priorities for action should be diversified by the type of development path and adapted according to the developmental stage of each system, with the aim of advancing towards the same organizational models and more advanced development.

Therefore, on a local level, a joint policy is part of a clear strategic plan of reference, in which a crucial role is given to investment in human capital, developing a knowledge society, whose support is essential to combine tools for the diffusion and circulation of information. These strategic priorities highlighted several times during the study, with a significant attempt (depending on the presence of more or less widespread under individual and collective) being made, aimed at the allocation of the intangible assets that each local system has

Structural adjustment is a necessary but not sufficient to ensure an effective and widespread development process as well as to transmit it to the competitive environment. Generally, it also effects the social and economic viability of local communities, which depends on the presence of an adequate offer of services to the local population, especially in the areas that are delayed, where marginal social and economic conditions make it very unattractive area for investment and generate an unstoppable demographic haemorrhage.

The approach to development policies must be multi-sectorial and varies according to specific territories, relating to the service categories, the enhancement of relational capital and infrastructures. However, in some contexts, it includes services to support the local economy and families as well as skills of the human capital.

These policy lines should not be implemented in an undifferentiated way throughout the region, but taking into account the *development paths* that characterize the different local systems, and for each path in relation to the *developmental stage* observed during the study.

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